

CHAPTER 9

INVITATION TO THE FEAST

WHAT are called modern comforts are unknown as yet ⁵¹¹ to the Min Chia, rich or poor. There is no water ³⁵⁴ supply except wells, no lighting except oil lamps or ³⁴² candles, no sanitation at all. Glass windows are a rare luxury never installed throughout a house, and the panes are small and of inferior quality. Most windows are of paper pasted over wooden lattices, which are very artistic but quite opaque, admitting only a dim light. The only system of heating houses in the cold winter evenings or wet days is the use of charcoal burners, for no Min Chia house has fireplaces or chimneys. In a Min Chia house with paper windows one may have either light or heat, but not both at once. For if the windows are shut the light is dim, and if they are kept open the charcoal brazier is not sufficient to keep the room warm.

These discomforts are inevitable in a country so far ⁵¹¹ removed from the centres where modern luxuries are produced, but the Min Chia do not make the most of the materials they have to hand, even when they are well able to afford them. A bamboo lattice screen hung over the doorway or window will keep out flies from a room in summer, and such screens are occasionally used. Most rooms, however, do ~~not~~ have them, and in the spring months before the rains, the ordinary Min Chia house is black with flies, about which everyone complains. Yet it never seems to occur to them to make use of lattice screens at every doorway. This attitude is indeed usual. Rich men live in discomfort, of which they are well aware, but seem to lack the knowledge of how to improve conditions.

776 haired monkey's lungs, liver, intestines, lips, and finger-nails. Its eyes are often old cowry shells. It is so wrapped that the face of the skull is visible at one end. The priest will not allow another person to touch his Abba Mula or sometimes even to see it, and he will not take it down from its shrine without first worshipping it and burning incense. Abba Mula has a permanent place in the hearts of the Ch'iang. One priest said to the writer with disapproval that "Mr. Torrance said that this was a temporary god until Jesus came."

• 354 We have noted the fact that one form of the Ch'iang stove has
776 three legs. These are sacred and must not be touched. One often has a hole in it, and in this hole is a ring. This leg is the fire god, Mo Po Sei or Mu Bu Sei. He controls the fire in the home and prevents it from burning the house. The second leg is Abba Sei. This is not the supreme god, but the male ancestor of the Ch'iang, who is worshipped and revered. The third is Ata Sei who is the female ancestor of the Ch'iang and is worshipped as such. This is the triad of the Ch'iang.

776 There is a group of five greatest gods. They are

1. Mu Byn Sei, who is supreme.
2. Ru Be Sei, the earth god. He controls the earth, causes rain and good crops, protects people from illness and other calamities, and helps them.
3. Lolo Sei. He controls the snow mountains and the shrubs and herbs that grow only a foot or two high near the snow line.
4. P'i Ru Sei. He controls the forests and large trees on the high mountains.
5. Su Mu Sei who also controls the forests, and governs wild animals and fowls.

All these five are worshipped on the housetops and in the sacred groves, at least in some localities, at the same time that the highest god is worshipped.

There is a second group of twelve lesser gods.

1. Ji Gwe Sei, the family or house god who protects the home and its inhabitants.
2. Stu Ja Sei, who controls and protects domestic animals, pigs, cows, sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, etc.
3. Ndzi Ju Sei. He is a god of wealth controlling the finances of the home, gold, silver, money, etc.

342 Cloth strips about 1 1/2 meters wide are sewed onto the sides of the horizontal tent roof. These are fastened to shorter poles (in front about 1.80 meters, on the sides and in the rear about 1 meter) outside the tent walls in such a way that they slant outward like eaves. In this way the entire space enclosed by the tent wall is covered. Around the tent a number of longer and shorter poles and stakes are hewn into the ground in order to stretch the large horizontal middle section of the tent roof and the slanting sides. These posts are fastened to the cloth of the roof with strong ropes made of yak hair. The horizontal roof consists of two symmetrical halves that converge in a line at the center of the two longitudinal sides. These two halves of the tent roof can be pulled apart slightly to permit the smoke from the fireplace below to escape.

354 The fireplace is always in the exact center of the tent and divides
342 it into two equal halves. It consists of a very primitive rectangular hearth made of loam, on the left side wall of which, as seen from the entrance, there are three fire holes. There are three corresponding round holes on top into which the cooking pots are set. The hearth does not extend from the front to the rear of one side; toward the rear it joins the place /20/ where the fuel is stored. The fuel consists of dried yak dung. In front of the hearth is the entrance to the tent. This is separated from the hearth by a wall about 2 meters wide, made of a piece of cloth stretched between special rods. Thus when one enters the tent one does not come directly into the main room but into a sort of anteroom formed by the cloth wall stretched out in front of the hearth. The person who enters is thus forced to turn right or left and therewith enters the left or right half of the tent, the two halves being sharply separated by the hearth and the adjacent area where the fuel is kept.

342 The side of the tent to the right of the entrance may be used only
562 by the men, the left side by the women. It is strictly forbidden to step across the hearth or the place where the fuel is stored. It is also considered very impolite to step over a person lying on the floor of the tent. Strangers, whether women or men, may under no circumstances enter the side not permissible to them. The residents of the tent may themselves set foot on the forbidden half only if they are alone in the tent and are obliged to fetch something from the other side. The woman, however, may not be seated in the right half. The man goes over to the left side to sleep.

352 In the section to the right is the hearth with a type of very primitive "k'ang" (1), that is to say, two short tubular passages are

1. The living room of the North Chinese house has

31: Scherman—26 E-4 (no date) 1915 AP1 Burma

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LISU YAO A66

Si
342 the pig sty. The layout almost without exception was the same: first a larger main room, in the middle of which, between the central posts, was the fireplace; behind this room is a wall rack for the "Nat," and on this Chinese incense sticks; a small room, partitioned by a mat wall, serves as a bedroom for the married couple. In
● [354] it is usually a mud stove with a large iron kettle, in which the fodder for the pigs is cooked. Needless to say, the houses of this cut-off community, and the occupants themselves, make a very wretched impression. According to tradition, they emigrated from China two hundred years ago. Si
173 Their religion is the demon cult which they have 771 in common with the mountain tribes. It must be assumed that they were influenced by the neighboring Shan and Palaung.

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101 Some elements of the Yao tribes (Ting-pan-Yao)
[167] (19) have migrated from Chinese areas to the

19. UBG I, 1, pp. 601 ff.

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[177] eastern edge of Kengtung, the most easterly of the
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342 Southern Shan States—1911: 512. The bulk of this people can be found in eastern Yunnan and the adjacent provinces, also in Tonkin and Annam. They are, of course—with the exception of their clothing—entirely Chinese in their customs and architecture. Their houses are built at ground level, without pile substructure, and made of split bamboo. They contain one large main room and a few sleeping compartments with bamboo beds standing at the sides. The fire is lit in
Y
[354] a mud stove. A Yao tribe, the Lenten, builds its houses on low piles. The Shan consider the Lenten as a group separate from the Tingpan-Yao. Though they have many things in common, there definitely exist differences which give weight to this supposition. They do not intermarry with other Yao tribes. According to UBG they belong to the Lahu group.